STATEMENT OF EDWARD J. MARKEY (D-MA) ON THE INTRODUCTION OF THE DIRTY BOMB PREVENTION ACT

I am very pleased to be here with Senator Clinton from New York and Senator Gregg New Hampshire to re-introduce legislation to reduce the threat of "dirty bombs" and radiological sabotage.

We have known for some time that Al Qaeda is trying to build dirty bombs or homemade nuclear weapons – documents with nuclear information have turned up in caves in Afghanistan, and a recent British report said that Al Qaeda had **already** built a crude radiological weapon. Despite this, and despite the recent designation to a "Code Orange" security threat in which dirty bombs were explicitly mentioned by Secretary Ridge, we have yet to do anything to improve the security of these materials.

- The NRC (Nuclear Regulatory Commission) said that a mere 1 Curie Dirty Bomb could contaminate several city blocks.
- The Federation of American Scientists found that blowing up a foot long cobalt rod would contaminate hundreds of square miles and increase the risk of death from cancer dramatically for years to follow. But stealing the cobalt is not the only way to create a dirty bomb. Large food and medical sterilization facilities containing millions of Curies of cobalt could become dirty bombs if a large truck bomb was detonated nearby, or if conventional explosives were hidden in a shipment to one of these facilities.
- There are more than 2 MILLION radioactive sources in the U.S., used for medical procedures, research, and industrial processes. In the past 5 years, nearly 1500 radioactive sources have been reported lost or stolen in the U.S., but less than half of them have been found. The NRC has admitted that it stopped tracking radioactive sources by serial number in 1984.
- **Fedex and Lands End seem to do a better job at tracking clothing purchases than the NRC does at tracking radioactive materials.**
- Even today, exactly 18 months after the attacks of September 11, U.S. Customs does **not** screen every package entering the U.S. from abroad to ensure that it is not leaking radiation. Radiation detectors are **not** located all ports of entry to the U.S., in vehicles used to deliver packages, or in facilities used to store packages for shipment to or within the U.S. The NRC has **not** promulgated new regulations to beef up security at sites that contain these materials, to better secure them while they are being transported, or to require background security checks of the individuals who handle them.

The danger is clear: The materials are located in thousands of locations across this country and abroad, and we are **not** ready. Today, we are **not** ready to detect the radiation in a package being shipped here from abroad. We are **not** ready to detect radiation in the subways, highways, malls, and stadiums of America. We can't even figure out which sources are lost because they aren't tracked using serial numbers.

The Dirty Bomb Prevention Act would require that these glaring security holes be fixed. It requires the NRC to set up a task force that also includes the defense community, the intelligence community, the homeland security officer and FEMA. The task force is to assess and recommend regulatory changes, which the NRC must then implement, to:

- Ensure there are systems for the secure tracking, recovery and storage of radioactive materials;

- Increase security for facilities that store these materials and require security background checks for personnel with access to them;
- Evaluate U.S. export controls on these materials to ensure that they do not fall into the wrong hands overseas; and
- Assess whether there are some uses of radioactive materials that could be easily accomplished using other, less dangerous materials.

It has been 18 months since the attacks of September 11, and on the eve of war with Iraq, we are probably at a higher risk of new terrorist attacks than we have been since then. It is time to take action to address the threat of a dirty bomb attack.

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